

Crab Pot Fishery

From March 1991 through November 1991, 22 trips were made with commercial crab potters in the Pamlico River. Catches and discards of blue crabs were examined from 1,278 crab pots. Samples were obtained from three areas in the riverine complex (Tables 3 and 4 and Figure 1).

The contents of each pot were treated separately and examined in the following manner: The carapace width was measured and the sex and peeler stage of all crabs were recorded. The total weight per pot for legal and sublegal crabs was obtained. All weights were taken to the nearest 0.01 kg and length and width measurements to the nearest millimeter. The approximate soak time, number, size, and relative location of cull rings, and geographic location was recorded for each pot. At the end of each sampling trip, the total number of pots fished and total catch were obtained from the fishermen.

Objective 2: Examine the physical injury and immediate mortality of blue crabs in the pot and trawl fisheries

Sublegal blue crabs (<127 mm) were examined for physical injury and cases of immediate mortality were noted for all size classes. Damage was noted as new, resulting from the current haul, or old, inferred from the presence of discolored and healed tissue and by the absence of bleeding. New damage was noted as major or minor. Major damage was defined as death, broken or crushed body parts, and multiple injuries. Minor damage was defined as recently autotomized appendages and loss or damage of walking legs or claws. For each crab examined the ensuing variables were recorded: carapace width, sex, maturity (females only), peeler stage, and the appropriate damage code. Damage code values ranged from 0 to 4 and were recorded under 12 headings, A through L:

1) Damage code:

- 0 - no missing or regenerated appendages; no damage to carapace.
- 1 - regenerating appendage
- 2 - missing or damaged appendage; damage to carapace; new wound (minor).
- 3 - missing or damaged appendage; damage to carapace; new wound (major).
- 4 - Missing or damaged appendage; damage to carapace; old wound

2) Heading codes:

Right side		Left side
A	Cheliped	G
B	First walking leg	H
C	Second walking leg	I
D	Third walking leg	J
E	Fourth walking leg	K
F	(Dorsal) Carapace	L (Ventral)

During crab pot sampling up to 25% of the sublegal crabs captured on a given day were examined for physical injury. Due to time restraints, no field